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ABSTRACT

The five year teacher education program at the University of Tennessee Knoxville requires students to major in an arts or science field and to minor in either elementary or secondary education. Following the acquisition of a bachelor's degree, students may enroll in fifth-year education courses and a year-long internship. Teaching licenses are awarded at the successful completion of the extended program. This study was conducted to determine the number of students who failed to return for a fifth year after earning their degree and to identify the reasons why. Subjects were students who applied for an internship placement during their senior year, were admitted to the program, but failed to enroll. A comparison was made between internship placement requests and actual internship enrollment over a 3-year period. An attempt was made to speak to each student by telephone. It was discovered that a total of 594 graduates were eligible to enroll during this period, but 58 or 9.8 percent of students failed to matriculate. Reasons given for student failure to matriculate into the fifth year included relocation of residence, financial problems, or enrollment in graduate school. (LL)

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Five Year Teacher Education Program Attrition

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Five Year Teacher Education Program Attrition

The five year or extended teacher education at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, requires students to major in an arts or science field and to minor in either Elementary or Secondary Education. Students earn their baccalaureate degree at the conclusion of their fourth year and then enroll in fifth year courses and an academic year long internship. Students earn their teacher license at the successful completion of the fifth academic year.

When the five year program began in 1987, there was concern among faculty that students would drop-out after completing their baccalaureate degree and, thus, fail to enroll as fifth year students. Much of the concern at the time stemmed from traditional four year program students who speculated aloud that they would not return after earning their degree to enroll in a fifth year. The purpose of this study was to determine the number of students who had failed to enroll and to analyze their reasons for failing to do so.

Method

Subjects

The subjects in this study were students who (1) were admitted to the teacher education program, (2) had applied during their senior year for a fifth year internship placement, (3) had earned their baccalaureate degree from UTK either the Fall, Spring, or Summer academic term before internships commenced in August, and (4) failed to enroll in an internship.

Procedures

A comparison was made between internship placement requests and the actual internship enrollment for the academic years 1991-92, 1992-93, and 1993-94. An attempt was made to speak to each student by telephone who failed to enroll to determine why they had not enrolled as anticipated.

Results

A total of 594 preservice teacher education students were eligible to enroll in the fifth or licensure year over the three year period of this investigation (i.e., August 1991-August 1993). During this period 58 or 9.8% of students failed to matriculate into the fifth year. Yearly mean attrition rates ranged from a high of 13.1% in 1992-93 to a low of 6.4% in 1993-94 (see Table 1).

Attrition rates for specific teaching fields ranged from a low of 5.3%(1) student in Art Education to a high of 31.6%(6) students in Foreign Language Education. Complete details are contained in Table 2.

Relocation of residence was the most frequently occurring reason students reported for not enrolling in the fifth year (f=13, 22.4%), followed by Financial (f=10, 17.2%), and Enrollment in Graduate School (f=8, 13.8%). Complete details appear in Table 3.

Discussion

The mean composite attrition rate of 9.8% (58 non-matriculants, total 594 students) over the first three years of this five year or extended teacher education program is well within an acceptable range. The fact that the smallest annual percentage, 6.4% (15 non-matriculants, total 236 students), occurred most recently is even more encouraging.

The fact that Physical Education students have the next to the highest defection rate possibly may be explained by the near absence of new teaching positions in that particular field. No ready explanation, however, is available to explain the high percentage of Foreign Language students who fail to enroll in the internship as the job market in this field appears to be fairly strong.

Though not appearing as such in Table 3, financing the fifth year is the largest single deterrent to students continuing into the fifth year. As Table 3 indicates, 10 (17.2%) students failed to matriculate in the fifth year due to financial problems and another 5 (8.6%) students delayed enrolling one year only to enroll the next after having earned sufficient money to fund the fifth year.

Recognizing the monetary hardship of a fifth year, the College of Education will continue to petition the State of Tennessee to fund interns through a forgiveness loan program.

Table 1
Intern Attrition Rates By Year

Academic Year	No. Eligible Interns	No. Interns Not Enrolled	Mean Percent Attrition
1991-92	136	14	10.3
1992-93	222	29	13.1
1993-94	236	15	6.4

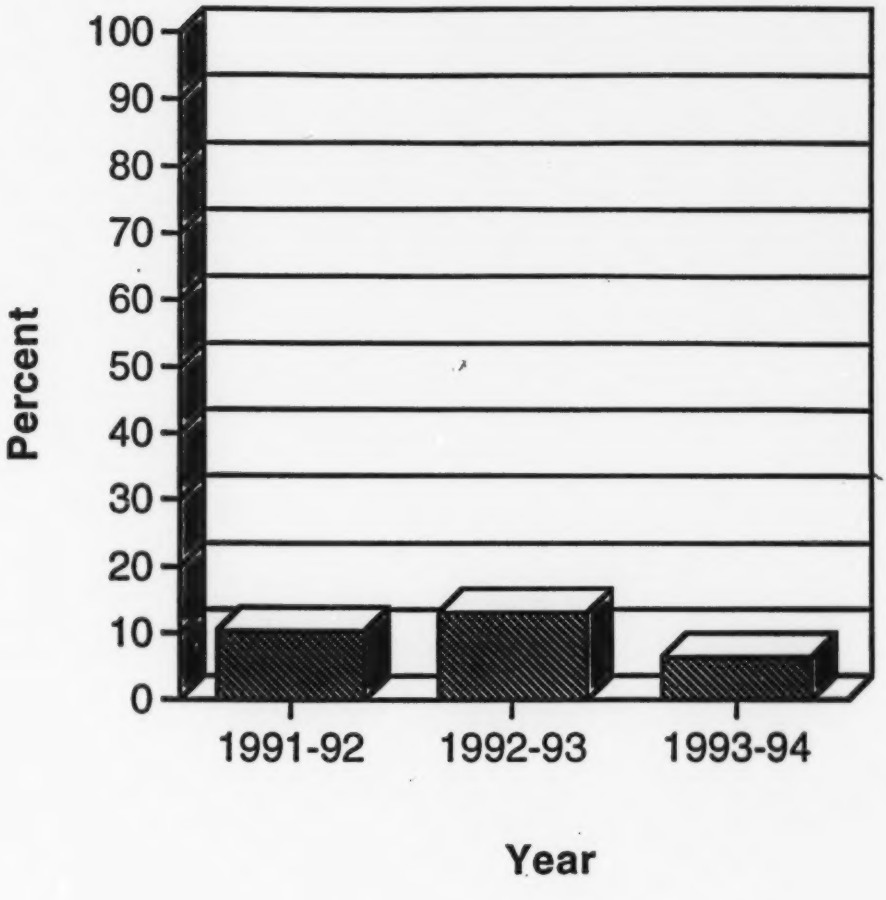

Figure 1. Intern Attrition Rates By Year

Table 2
Intern Attrition By Field Over Three Years

Teaching Field	No. Eligible Interns	No. Failing to Enroll
Foreign Language	19	6 (31.6%)
Physical Education	12	3 (25.0%)
Music	14	2 (14.3%)
Social Science	56	7 (12.5%)
Science	24	3 (12.5%)
English	68	8 (11.8%)
Special Education	51	6 (11.8%)
Mathematics	20	2 (10.0%)
Elementary	311	20 (6.4%)
Art	19	1 (5.3%)
Total	**594**	**58 (9.8%)**

Table 3
Attrition Rates By Reason By Year
(Self-Report)

Reason	1991-92		1992-93		1993-94		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Relocated	1	7.1	7	24.1	5	33.3	13	22.4
Financial	3	21.4	4	13.3	3	20.0	10	17.2
Enrolled in Graduate School	4	28.6	3	10.3	1	6.7	8	13.8
Accepted Non-Teaching Job	2	14.3	2	6.9	2	13.3	6	10.3
Delayed One Year, Then Interned	3	21.4	2	6.9	0	0.0	5	8.6
Unable to contact	0	0.0	4	13.3	1	6.7	5	8.6
Pregnancy/Family Responsibilities	0	0.0	3	10.3	0	0.0	3	5.2
Student Taught at another Institution	0	0.0	2	6.9	1	6.7	3	5.2
Disliked Program	0	0.0	2	6.9	0	0.0	2	3.4
Disliked Teaching	1	7.1	0	0.0	1	6.7	2	3.4
Married	0	0	0	0.0	1	6.7	1	1.7
Total	**14**	**99.9**	**29**	**98.9**	**15**	**100.1**	**58**	**99.8**

Note: Rounding accounts for totals not equalling 100.0%.